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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000163

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GAZA HUMANITARIAN UPDATE - JANUARY 21

REF: JERUSALEM 157

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Kerem Shalom crossing, the Karni conveyor belt, and Nahal Oz fuel transfer station are open on January 21. Ninety AmCits were in the process of evacuating Gaza through the Erez crossing as of mid-day January 21. UNRWA reports that it will seek to avoid a repeat of the January 19 hijacking of some of its trucks. End summary.

#### Crossings

¶2. (SBU) January 21: Kerem Shalom crossing is open for humanitarian and commercial shipments to Gaza. Nahal Oz is open for industrial fuel shipments for the power plant. The conveyor belt at Karni is open for wheat and grain imports, and Rafah crossing is open for medical evacuations to Egypt and shipments of supplies for Gaza hospitals.

¶3. (SBU) Ninety American citizens, along with a number of third-country nationals, were in the process of evacuating Gaza through the Erez crossing for onward transportation to the Allen Bridge and Jordan as of mid-day January 21. A second evacuation of a similar number of AmCits plus third-country nationals, is planned for January 22.

¶4. (SBU) January 20: Kerem Shalom was open for 130 truckloads and Nahal Oz fuel station transferred 550,000 liters of industrial fuel for the power plant. Eighty-two truckloads of wheat and grains were transferred on the Karni conveyor belt, and Rafah crossing was open to 10 truckloads of incoming medical supplies and medical evacuees to Egypt, according to transportation contacts at the crossings.

#### Internal Movement/Distribution

¶5. (SBU) UNRWA contacts in Gaza reported that they are now free to move throughout Gaza. The IDF announced early on January 21 that it had completely withdrawn from its remaining positions in Gaza.

¶6. (C) UNRWA reported that it did not pick up cargo at Kerem Shalom crossing on January 20 after 13 truckloads of UNRWA supplies were hijacked on January 19. UNRWA reported that it expects to recover the hijacked truckloads on January 21, having received assurances from Hamas that the hijacking was "not sanctioned and would not happen again." UNRWA now plans to collect humanitarian cargo from Kerem Shalom on January 21.

#### Food

¶7. (SBU) UN and private sector contacts reported an increased level of food supplies in Gaza City markets, with commercial food imports via Kerem Shalom this week. They claimed that prices are double what they were prior to the beginning of IDF operations on December 27. Because of the cash shortage in Gaza, UNRWA intends to temporarily add PA employees (who are also registered refugees) to its emergency food aid program until the PA is able to resume salary payments.

#### Electricity and Water

¶8. (SBU) Power plant contacts said on January 21 that they need the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company (GEDCO) to make repairs to key transmission lines in Gaza City in order to increase plant output to 80 MW. The plant has received enough fuel January 19-21 to fire up a second turbine, but engineers reported that increased output without transmission line repairs may short-out the grid. Plant contacts confirmed that most Gaza homes get 12-14 hours/day of electricity from the grid. OCHA reported on January 20 that eight of ten Israeli feeder lines are functioning.

¶9. (SBU) ICRC contacts reported on January 21 that damage to Gaza's water infrastructure was limited primarily to water pumps, pipes, and four water wells.

#### Cash

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¶10. (SBU) The Palestine Monetary Authority delivered USD 5 million and NIS 10 million in banknotes to UNRWA on January 20. UNRWA collected the banknotes from Erez crossing and will use this cash to pay its December salaries, work program wages, and stipends to its hardship case families. This banknote delivery represents 25 percent of UNRWA's outstanding request from early December. Contacts reported that bank branches in Gaza opened on January 20-21.

WALLES